OCT 29 1910

The Black Cat

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Vol. XVI., No. 2. Whole No. 182. Copyright, 1910, by The Shortstory Publishing Co.

THE SHORTSTORY PUBLISHING COMPANY 41-47 Pearl Street, Boston, Massachusetts
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A Monthly Magazine of Original Short Stories.

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Vol. XVI., No. 2. Whole No., 182. NOVEMBER, 1910. 10 cents a copy $1.00 a year.

Entered at the Post-Office at Boston, Mass., as second-class matter.

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The Inevitable White Man.*

BY JACK LONDON.

HE black will never understand the white, nor the white the black, as long as black is black and white is white." So said Captain Woodward. We sat in the parlor of Charley Roberts' pub in Apia, drinking long Abdul Hammeds compounded and shared with us by the aforesaid Charley Roberts, who claimed the recipe direct from Steevens, famous for having invented the Abdul Hammed at a time when he was spurred on by Nile thirst — the Steevens who was responsible for "With Kitchener to Khartum," and who passed out at the siege of Ladysmith.

Captain Woodward, short and squat, elderly, burned by forty years of tropic sun, and with the most beautiful liquid brown eyes I ever saw in a man, spoke from a vast experience. The criss-cross of scars on his bald pate bespoke a tomahawk intimacy with the black, and of equal intimacy was the advertisement, front and rear, on the right side of his neck, where an arrow had at one time entered and been pulled clean through. As he explained, he had been in a hurry on that occasion — the arrow impeded his running — and he felt that he could not take the time to break off the head and pull out the shaft the way it had come in. At the

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present moment he was commander of the *Savaii,* the big steamer that recruited labor from the westward for the German plantations on Samoa.

"Half the trouble is the stupidity of the whites," said Roberts, pausing to take a swig from his glass and to curse the Samoan bar-boy in affectionate terms. "If the white man would lay himself out a bit to understand the workings of the black man's mind, most of the messes would be avoided."

"I've seen a few who claimed they understood niggers," Captain Woodward retorted, "and I always took notice that they were the first to be *kai-kai'd* (eaten). Look at the missionaries in New Guinea and the New Hebrides — the martyr isle of Erromanga and all the rest. Look at the Austrian expedition that was cut to pieces in the Solomons, in the bush of Guadalcanar. And look at the traders themselves, with a score of years' experience, making their brag that no nigger would ever get them, and whose heads to this day are ornamenting the rafters of the canoe houses.

"There was old Johnny Simons — twenty-six years on the raw edges of Melanesia, swore he knew the niggers like a book and that they'd never do for him, and he passed out at Marovo Lagoon, New Georgia, had his head sawed off by a black Mary (woman) and an old nigger with only one leg, having left the other leg in the mouth of a shark while diving for dynamited fish.

"There was Billy Watts, horrible reputation as a nigger-killer, a man to scare the devil. I remember lying at Cape Little, New Ireland you know, when the niggers stole half a case of trade tobacco — cost him about three dollars and a half. In retaliation he turned out and shot six niggers, smashed up their war-canoes, and burned two villages. And it was at Cape Little, four years afterward, that he was jumped along with fifty Buku boys he had with him fishing beche-de-mer. In five minutes they were all dead, with the exception of three boys who got away in a canoe.

"Don't talk to me about understanding the nigger. The white man's mission is to farm the world, and it's a big-enough job cut out for him. What time has he got left to understand niggers anyway?"

"Just so," said Roberts. "And somehow it doesn't seem necessary, after all, to understand the niggers. In direct propor-

tion to the white man's stupidity is his success in farming the world——"

"And putting the fear of God into the nigger's heart," Captain Woodward blurted out. "Perhaps you're right, Roberts. Perhaps it's his stupidity that makes him succeed, and surely one phase of his stupidity is his inability to understand the niggers. But there's one thing sure, the white has to run the niggers whether he understands them or not. It's inevitable. It's fate."

"And of course the white man is inevitable — it's the niggers' fate," Roberts broke in. "Tell the white man there's pearl-shell in some lagoon infested by ten thousand howling cannibals, and he'll head there all by his lonely, with half a dozen kanaka divers and a tin alarm clock for chronometer, all packed like sardines on a commodious, five-ton ketch. Whisper that there's a gold-strike at the North Pole, and that same inevitable white-skinned creature will set out at once, armed with pick and shovel, a side of bacon, and the latest patent rocker — and what's more, he'll get there. Tip it off to him that there's diamonds on the red-hot ramparts of hell, and Mr. White Man will storm the ramparts and set old Satan himself to pick-and-shovel work. That's what comes of being stupid and inevitable."

"But I wonder what the black man must think of the — the inevitableness," I said.

Captain Woodward broke into quiet laughter. His eyes had a reminiscent gleam.

"I'm just wondering what the niggers of Malu thought and still must be thinking of the one inevitable white man we had on board when we visited them in the *Duchess*," he explained. Roberts mixed three more Abdul Hammeds. "That was twenty years ago. Saxtorph was his name. He was certainly the most stupid man I ever saw, but he was as inevitable as death. There was only one thing that chap could do, and that was shoot. I remember the first time I ran into him — right here in Apia twenty years ago. That was before your time, Roberts. I was sleeping at Dutch Henry's hotel, down where the market is now. Ever heard of him? He made a tidy stake smuggling arms in to the rebels, sold out his hotel, and was killed in Sydney just six weeks afterward in a saloon row.

"But Saxtorph. One night I'd just got to sleep, when a couple of cats began to sing in the courtyard. It was out of bed and up window, water-jug in hand. But just then I heard the window of the next room go up. Two shots were fired, and the window was closed. I fail to impress you with the celerity of the transaction. Ten seconds at the outside. Up went the window, bang bang went the revolver, and down went the window. Whoever it was, he had never stopped to see the effect of his shots. He knew. Do you follow me? — he *knew*. There was no more cat-concert, and in the morning there lay the two offenders, stone-dead. It was marvelous to me. It still is marvelous. First, it was starlight, and Saxtorph shot without drawing a bead; next, he shot so rapidly that the two reports were like a double report; and finally, he knew he had hit his marks without looking to see.

"Two days afterward he came on board to see me. I was mate, then, on the *Duchess*, a whacking big one-hundred-and-fifty-ton schooner, a blackbirder. And let me tell you that blackbirders were blackbirders in those days. There weren't any government inspectors, and no government protection for *us*, either. It was rough work, give and take, if we were finished we were finished and nothing said, and we ran niggers from every south sea island they didn't kick us off from. Well, Saxtorph came on board, John Saxtorph was the name he gave. He was a sandy little man, hair sandy, complexion sandy, and eyes sandy, too. Nothing striking about him. His soul was as neutral as his color scheme. He said he was strapped and wanted to ship on board. Would go cabin-boy, cook, supercargo, or common sailor. Didn't know any of the billets, but said that he was willing to learn. I didn't want him, but his shooting had so impressed me that I took him as common sailor, wages three pounds per month.

"He was willing to learn all right, I'll say that much. But he was constitutionally unable to learn anything. He could no more box the compass than I could mix drinks like Roberts here. And as for steering, he gave me my first gray hairs. I never dared risk him at the wheel when we were running in a big sea, while full-and-by and close-and-by were insoluble mysteries. Couldn't ever tell the difference between a sheet and a tackle, simply couldn't. The fore-throat-jig and the jib-jig were all one to him.

Tell him to slack off the main-sheet, and before you knew it he'd drop the peak. He fell overboard three times, and he couldn't swim. But he was always cheerful, never seasick, and he was the most willing man I ever knew. He was an uncommunicative soul. Never talked about himself. His history, so far as we were concerned, began the day he signed on the *Duchess*. Where he learned to shoot, the stars alone can tell. He was a Yankee — that much we knew from the twang in his speech. And that was all we ever did know.

"And now we begin to get to the point. We had bad luck in the New Hebrides, only fourteen boys for five weeks, and we ran up before the southeast for the Solomons. Malaita, then as now, was good recruiting ground, and we ran in to Malu, on the northwestern corner. There's a shore-reef and an outer reef, and a mighty nervous anchorage; but we made it all right and fired off our dynamite as a signal to the niggers to come down and be recruited. In three days we got not a boy. The niggers came off to us in their canoes by hundreds, but they only laughed when we showed them beads and calico and hatchets and talked of the delights of plantation work in Samoa.

"On the fourth day there came a change. Fifty-odd boys signed on and were billeted in the main-hold, with the freedom of the deck, of course. And of course, looking back, this wholesale signing on was suspicious, but at the time we thought some powerful chief had removed the ban against recruiting. The morning of the fifth day our two boats went ashore as usual — one to cover the other, you know, in case of trouble. And, as usual, the fifty niggers on board were on deck, loafing, talking, smoking and sleeping. Saxtorph and myself, along with four other sailors, were all that were left on board. The two boats were manned with Gilbert islanders. In the one were the captain, the supercargo, and the recruiter. In the other, which was the covering boat and which lay off shore a hundred yards, was the second mate. Both boats were well armed, though trouble was little expected.

"Four of the sailors, including Saxtorph, were scraping the poop rail. The fifth sailor, rifle in hand, was standing guard by the water tank just for'ard of the mainmast. I was for'ard, put-

ting in the finishing licks on a new jaw for the fore-gaff. I was just reaching for my pipe where I had laid it down, when I heard a shot from shore. I straightened up to look. Something struck me on the back of the head, partially stunning me and knocking me to the deck. My first thought was that something had carried away aloft; but even as I went down and before I struck the deck, I heard the devil's own tattoo of rifles from the boats, and, twisting sidewise, I caught a glimpse of the sailor who was standing guard. Two big niggers were holding his arms, and a third nigger, from behind, was braining him with a tomahawk.

"I can see it now, the water tank, the mainmast, the gang hanging on to him, the hatchet descending on the back of his head, and all under the blazing sunlight. I was fascinated by that growing vision of death. The tomahawk seemed to take a horribly long time to come down. I saw it land, and the man's legs give under him as he crumpled. The niggers held him up by sheer strength while he was hacked a couple of times more. Then I got two more hacks on the head and decided that I was dead. So did the brute that was hacking me. I was too helpless to move, and I lay there and watched them removing the sentry's head. I must say they did it slick enough. They were old hands at the business.

"The rifle-firing from the boats had ceased, and I made no doubt that they were finished off and that the end had come to everything. It was only a matter of moments when they would return for my head. They were evidently taking the heads from the sailors aft. Heads are valuable on Malaita, especially white heads. They have the place of honor in the canoe-houses of the salt-water natives. What particular decorative effect the bushmen get out of them I don't know, but they prize them just as much as the salt-water crowd.

"I had a dim notion of escaping, and I crawled on hands and knees to the winch, where I managed to drag myself to my feet. From there I could look aft and see three heads on top of the cabin — the heads of three sailors I had given orders to for months. The niggers saw me standing, and started for me. I reached for my revolver, and found they had taken it. I can't say that I was scared. I've been near to death several times, but

it never seemed easier than right then. I was half-stunned, and nothing seemed to matter.

"The leading nigger had armed himself with a cleaver from the galley, and he grimaced like an ape as he prepared to slice me down. But the slice was never made. He went down on the deck all of a heap, and I saw the blood gush from his mouth. In a dim way I heard a rifle go off and continue to go off. Nigger after nigger went down. My senses began to clear, and I noted that there was never a miss. Every time that rifle went off a nigger dropped. I sat down on deck beside the winch and looked up. Perched in the cross-trees was Saxtorph. How he had managed it I can't imagine, for he had carried up with him two Winchesters and I don't know how many bandoliers of ammunition; and he was now doing the only thing in this world he was fitted to do.

"I've seen shooting and slaughter, but I never saw anything like that. I sat by the winch and watched the show. I was weak and faint, and it seemed to be all a dream. Bang, bang, bang, bang, went his rifle, and thud, thud, thud, thud, went the niggers to the deck. It was amazing to see them go down. After their first rush to get me when about a dozen had dropped, they seemed paralyzed; but he never left off pumping his gun. By this time canoes and the two boats arrived from shore, armed with Sniders, and with Winchesters which they had captured in the boats. The fusillade they let loose on Saxtorph was tremendous. Luckily for him the niggers are only good at close range. They are not used to putting the guns to their shoulders. They wait until they are right on top of a man, and then they shoot from the hip. When his rifle got too hot, Saxtorph changed off. That had been his idea when he carried two rifles up with him.

"The astounding thing was the rapidity of his fire. Also, he never made a miss. If ever anything was inevitable, that man was. It was the swiftness of it that made the slaughter so appalling. The niggers did not have time to think. When they did manage to think they went over the side in a rush, capsizing the canoes of course. Saxtorph never let up. The water was covered with them, and plump, plump, plump, he dropped his bullets into them. Not a single miss, and I could hear distinctly the thud of every bullet as it buried in human flesh.

"The niggers spread out and headed for the shore, swimming. The water was carpeted with bobbing heads, and I stood up, as in a dream, and watched it all — the bobbing heads and the heads that ceased to bob. Some of the long shots were magnificent. Only one man reached the beach, but as he stood up to wade ashore, Saxtorph got him. It was beautiful. And when a couple of niggers ran down to drag him out of the water, Saxtorph got them, too.

"I thought everything was over then, when I heard the rifle go off again. A nigger had come out of the cabin companion on the run for the rail and gone down in the middle of it. The cabin must have been full of them. I counted twenty. They came up one at a time and jumped for the rail. But they never got there. It reminded me of trap-shooting. A black body would pop out of the companion, bang would go Saxtorph's rifle, and down would go the black body. Of course, those below did not know what was happening on deck, so they continued to pop out until the last one was finished off.

"Saxtorph waited a while to make sure, and then came down on deck. He and I were all that were left of the *Duchess'* complement, and I was pretty well to the bad, while he was helpless now that the shooting was over. Under my direction he washed out my scalp-wounds and sewed them up. A big drink of whiskey braced me to make an effort to get out. There was nothing else to do. All the rest were dead. We tried to get up sail, Saxtorph hoisting and I holding the turn. He was once more the stupid lubber. He couldn't hoist worth a cent, and when I fell in a faint it looked all up with us.

"When I came to, Saxtorph was sitting helplessly on the rail, waiting to ask me what he should do. I told him to overhaul the wounded and see if there were any able to crawl. He gathered together six. One, I remember, had a broken leg; but Saxtorph said his arms were all right. I lay in the shade, brushing the flies off and directing operations, while Saxtorph bossed his hospital gang. I'll be blessed if he didn't make those poor niggers heave at every rope on the pin-rails before he found the halyards. One of them let go the rope in the midst of the hoisting and slipped down to the deck dead; but Saxtorph hammered the others and

made them stick by the job. When the fore and main were up, I told him to knock the shackle out of the anchor-chain and let her go. I had had myself helped aft to the wheel, where I was going to make a shift at steering. I can't guess how he did it, but instead of knocking the shackle out down went the second anchor, and there we were doubly moored.

"In the end he managed to knock both shackles out and raise the staysail and jib, and the *Duchess* filled away for the entrance. Our decks were a spectacle. Dead and dying niggers were everywhere. They were wedged away, some of them, in the most inconceivable places. The cabin was full of them where they had crawled off the deck, and cashed in. I put Saxtorph and his graveyard gang to work heaving them overside, and over they went, the living and the dead. The sharks had fat pickings that day. Of course our four murdered sailors went the same way. Their heads, however, we put in a sack with weights, so that by no chance should they drift on the beach and fall into the hands of the niggers.

"Our five prisoners I decided to use as crew, but they decided otherwise. They watched their opportunity and went over the side. Saxtorph got two in mid-air with his revolver, and would have shot the other three in the water if I hadn't stopped him. I was sick of the slaughter, you see, and, besides, they'd helped work the schooner out. But it was mercy thrown away, for the sharks got the three of them.

"I had brain fever or something after we got clear of the land. The *Duchess* lay hove-to for three weeks, then I pulled myself together and we jogged on with her to Sydney. Anyway, those niggers of Malu learned the everlasting lesson that it is not good to monkey with a white man. In their case, Saxtorph was certainly inevitable."

Charley Roberts emitted a long whistle and said:

"Well, I should say so. But whatever became of Saxtorph?"

"He drifted into seal-hunting and became a crackerjack. For six years he was high line on both the Victoria and San Francisco fleets. The seventh year his schooner was seized in Bering Sea by a Russian cruiser, and all hands, so the talk went, were

slammed into the Siberian salt mines. At least I've never heard of him since."

"Farming the world," Roberts muttered. "Farming the world. Well, here's to them. Somebody's got to do it — farm the world, I mean."

Captain Woodward rubbed the criss-crosses on his bald head.

"I've done my share of it," he said. "Forty years now. This will be my last trip. Then I'm going home to stay."

"I'll wager the wine you don't," Roberts challenged. "You'll die in the harness, not at home."

Captain Woodward promptly accepted the bet, but personally I think Charley Roberts has the best of it.

Hatching Trouble.*

BY JACK BROWNING.

IT was not a long bench; and two men and a widow exceeded its capacity by about one man. The partners smiled nervously and pulled at their whiskers. "If you was either of you alone," the widow tittered, "I ain't sure I'd let you set by me on this narrow bench."

"Oh, we wouldn't hurt you!" Peter dared to protest.

"Course not!" Andy breathlessly assured her.

"Well," the widow replied, wisely, "men are to be trusted, but a man ain't. What I come up to see you about, though, is this. The Grays are going to move back east, as you've maybe heard, and Mrs. Gray give me these two hens and these two settings of eggs." She pointed to the hens which lay, legs tied, near by, then let her eyes droop to the basket of eggs at her feet. "They're good setters, Mrs. Gray says, and she's been careful with the eggs. But of course they had to come just as I was going away, and I got to get somebody to take care of them."

"Why," said Peter, emboldened by anxiety, "you ain't going to desert the old gulch, are you?"

And Andy, not to be outdone by his partner, said, "No, you ain't going to desert the old gulch, are you?"

"Goodness, no!" the widow cried. "You see, one of my sisters lives in Cheyenne and the other's coming out to visit her, and while she's there we're going to have a little reunion. Don't expect to be gone more'n a month."

The partners shuffled and fidgeted in relief.

"And now," the widow went on, "I want you to take care of my hens while I'm gone. Just make 'em a nest — each one in a box by itself so's they won't fight — and your table scraps 'll be feed enough. I wouldn't trouble you, but chickens is worth their

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weight in gold up here, and there ain't nobody in the gulch I can trust like you two."

Fortunately the compliment was thinned by being spread over both partners, but even then their skin shriveled and their tongues became parched.

"Guess you know how to set a hen, don't you?" the widow asked.

The partners nodded confidently.

"And I'll tell you what we'll do — something to make it kind of interesting. Each one of you take a hen, and I'll bring a prize to the one that's got the most chicks when I get back — something nice!"

In her voice and manner were a merry lure and a mysterious half-promise and all those countless blandishments that may be so well employed by a plump, bright-eyed widow. And having thus poisoned the slumber of two tired men, she took her leave.

By lantern light the partners drew from the preciously few wisps of straw in their bunk and made nests for the hens; and they stayed up late, watching anxiously even after the hens had shown every sign of contentment. With good-humored banter, each already claiming the prize, they went finally to bed.

After breakfast on the morrow came the first hitch — the division of the table scraps. A last crust in a famine camp, a last drop under a desert sun, a lucky strike — simple things to share, these; but a plump, bright-eyed widow — not so simple, she. Still, this first morning, their inborn fairness and long-tried friendship made a jest even of this trying situation.

That evening, supper finished, the division was made in silence. Afterwards, Peter, instead of sitting down with his pipe, began to drive palings about his hen's nesting-box.

"We got to have fair play — both of us wants it," he explained, apologetically, in reply to Andy's look of inquiry. "Why, I've heard tell of one hen stealing eggs from another — chicks, too. And I don't want my hen snouging from yours, and you don't want your hen snouging from mine — do we?"

"That's right," Andy agreed. "We'll just make two coops and let the hens go it alone." Then he began to drive palings.

By employing tact and jest, the partners half hid the jealous intent of the osier wall; but they could not quite escape the pricking

realization that for the first time in their long intimacy they had permitted a division of their interests; that, in short, a fence had been raised between them.

The days passed. The coops were finished, had received the final touches; but from the fence between there rose and extended, higher and farther, a shadowy projection which, lengthening, turning, twisting with impish resistlessness, gradually divided the table, the bench, the bunk, the trail to the prospect, the prospect itself. The scraps were apportioned in silence, but it was by no means the silence of indifference. Each man was fairly starving himself in order that his hen might eat. And to these daily occasions, standardized by their regularity, were added sporadic incidents that made silence an achievement.

For example, when Andy came up from camp one day with a small sack of wheat, which his cunning and a telegram had brought from Cheyenne, indignant words crowded even to Peter's whiskers. But he restrained himself and ordered a larger sack of wheat and a package of ground bone. In such ways as this the shadowy projection of the fence was made higher, longer, blacker.

On the morning of the twenty-first day of the dominion of the hens the partners looked each into his own coop and listened anxiously; but, except for the solemn hens, there was no sign of life. So they packed their lunch and toiled as usual up to their hole in the mountain of lures.

The prospect, almost a mine now, showed extraordinary promise this day; but the partners worked without zeal. While the pay streak widened, their thoughts turned to the crisis below; while their drills pierced the shell of the mountain, perhaps the tap of a fingernail there below would free a too frail chick — and win the prize. Long before the usual hour they quit by tacit consent and hurried down to the cabin.

During the remainder of the afternoon they hung over their hens, each brought by anxiety to an open disregard for the eyes of the other. First one and then the other would become rigid and breathless when, on his side of the fence, a fluffy ball partway protruded from maternal feathers and timid yeeps were answered by reassuring clucks; then would wilt despairingly when

the yeeps and clucks were echoed beyond the fence. Yet neither dared to disturb his hen long enough to make a count; and neither hen was obliging enough to move from its nest and show the complete result of its weeks' patience. The partners went finally to bed; and, since the same pair of blankets covered them, they were compelled to maintain a simulation of sleep even at the expense of straining and breaking muscles.

On the morrow they rose with great deliberation, extended the deliberation through breakfast, and reinforced it with absolute unconcern when they went out to feed the hens.

The hens were scratching importantly, and, cluttering about each, as much at home as if they had spent a year instead of a night in the willow compound, were nine chicks. Each nest held four dismal eggs.

"Looks like a tie," Peter observed uninterestedly. And Andy, in the same tone, replied, "Uh-huh."

"Better settle it now," Peter went on indifferently, "that the winner'll be the one that's got the most when the widow gets back — huh?" And Andy, equally indifferent, replied, "I reckon."

So ended the weeks of hatching and began the weeks of brooding. With every manner of feed lavished on them, the chicks prospered and grew fat. But no word came from the widow. Her month passed, took week after week with it; and still no word.

By and by the coops could no longer hold the chicks; they feathered their wings and escaped to the freedom of the yard. The partners viewed these early escapes with all the trepidation of a mother on discovering her toddler's first attempts streetward; but by and by they overcame their misgivings, deciding that the chicks, in spite of danger from prowlers, must have exercise. There seemed little likelihood that the two broods would become mixed, for each collected at twilight in its own coop; and besides, each man was confident that he could sort his own chicks to the last feather — with the possible exception of two white cockerels. The likeness of these made positive identification out of the question, but it also made a possible interchange of no consequence.

So the chicks grew to young chickenhood, fine rewards for patient care. But one evening as the partners approached the cabin

at the close of day, they stopped abruptly, and Peter raised his voice hoarsely in rage and dismay. At his feet lay a speckled pullet, dead. Andy said nothing; it was Peter's pullet.

A step farther on, however, came Andy's turn. His black cockerel, in whose trim tail and pink suggestion of a comb he had taken much pride, lay at his feet, like Peter's pullet, dead. As hoarsely as Peter, he raised his voice. Then Peter a second time; and Andy again.

The roof-poles of the cabin projected beyond the sod covering; and on these roosts of refuge they found all that were left. Near the top they saw Andy's hen and a pullet; lower down Peter's hen and a pullet; in between was a white cockerel.

From the cockerel to each other, back to the cockerel, and then to each other again, the partners turned many a stern look. But in his heart neither could say, "It is mine." It was a tense moment; but though lips moved, the inborn fairness of each withheld an open-spoken claim.

"Well," said Peter, at last, "we'll leave it to the hens." And Andy agreed.

This plan, however, failed to work out. As twilight thickened in the gulch, the hens, each with its pullet, fluttered down to their coops and in pairs went to roost. But the white cockerel, perhaps prematurely advanced by the disaster to full chickenhood, clung to its pole. In the early morning, as if to prove that the terrors of night had in nowise weakened its resolve to begin a new life of solitary endeavor, it attempted its first crow. During the day it condescended to scratch with the others; but at twilight it returned to its high perch.

As this happened night after night, the partners fell more and more into moody silence. They interrupted oftener and oftener the steady routine of their days and sought with increasing frequency the fount of forgetfulness in the camp below. Returning late from these visits, they looked invariably up to the roof-pole and invariably the white cockerel was there.

One evening as they stood at the bar, side by side from force of habit, but in reality far, far apart, a voice emerged from a circle behind them and came to their ears.

"Yes," said the voice, "I seen the widow in Cheyenne — just

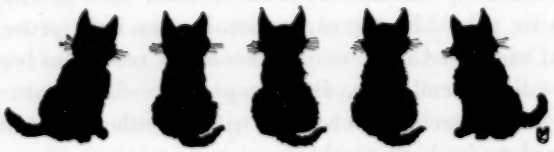
before she started for Kansas on her honeymoon. Looked chipper as a girl. Some old sweetheart, I heard tell — some feller she knowed before her first husband. They run together accidental in Cheyenne, and — "

But the rest was left for the circle. The partners departed and swung off through the night toward their cabin, neither speaking. As they came up, both, from force of habit, looked toward the cockerel. Then Peter spoke:

"Say, Andy, there's one way to settle it."

"Uh-huh," Andy replied. "You build a fire while I cut his head off."

So, at midnight, the partners sat down to fried chicken. And the shadowy projection of the fence between had disappeared.



The Desert Dancing Girl.*

BY ALMA L. SMITH.

PERHAPS I had slept an hour on the desert when the uproar started. I sat up suddenly in the darkness of a camel's-hair tent with the echo of a woman's screams vibrating in my ears. Going to the door I beheld in amazement my traveling companions, the Arabs, falling upon their faces, while they chanted loudly in a weird, minor key.

I made out that a baby had died. It belonged to a Persian woman who traveled in a cage-like box on a camel by day, but danced for the footsore pilgrims by night.

As I gazed on the curious people before me the woman sprang from the ground beside her dead child and, waving her bare, dusky arms over the prostrate praying tribe, wildly called down curses on the camel drivers.

"Vile, creeping things! May you die of thirst and your bones lie forever outside the gates of Kerbela (the Holy City). Poisonous scorpions! May you be turned to blind, green owls and fly screaming through the air a million years. You crept so slow you killed my baby."

I moved nearer the edge of the low-chanting mass. The woman's grief-crazed brain seemed to fail her, she could think of no more horrible sentences to pass on the slaves, but she remained standing in the midst of the fallen men, swaying her graceful body to the rhythm of their unearthly melody.

She was young and perfectly proportioned. The beautiful, sad, sad eyes, the black, disordered hair, the padded jacket and short skirt, the shapely, sandaled feet, all went to make a picture in the glistening sand and moonlight, a picture that haunts me yet.

But I, a Nazarene, must offer no sympathy. I dared not dis-

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turb the odd ceremony. As I listened and looked the voices grew softer, the woman swayed more slowly and finally sank exhausted to the ground. The chant died off into a scarcely audible whisper, like the wind in trees at midnight. I hardly realized just when they stopped entirely, so light had been the last sound wave. A hush like that following a benediction hung over us a few seconds before the men got up quietly and began talking to one another.

Almost directly they dug a shallow hole and buried the child, while the mother sat apparently unmoved, staring dry-eyed across the heat-scorched sands.

By ones and twos the tired men disappeared into their tents until only the mother, one Arab and myself were left outside. This native was a Haji, with a beard painted fiery red, and unquestioned authority. He now saw fit to exercise this power by abusing the woman and ordering her to bed. She shrank from him and begged piteously to be let alone. I saw an expression of deepest cruelty overspread his features as he bent over her, hissing.

"So be it. You sit here this night and to-morrow your ear drums shall be bored in with thorns and your soft eyelids split thrice." And his fingers caressed a keen knife blade while he spoke.

The threat was sufficient. Horror shone in her dark, tragic eyes. With one last, long look toward the small mound of sand, she moved rapidly away to her tent. I noticed the unconscious grace, the subtle glide of her movements. I felt the charm and understood why she danced for weary men.

I, too, sought sleep and my pallet once more but mental rest was far from me. For the hundredth time within a month I condemned myself for a travel-mad idiot who had followed the bait of adventure 17,000 miles from Western civilization.

Why, I mused, would I endure the hardships of a desert trip with a band of wanderers, rocking all day on a camel's back, eating only dried fruits and drinking muddy Tigris water from a goatskin — why? Because the sweet siren voice of Adventure called — was still calling — and I smiled at the ability of that voice to be heard over these bodily discomforts as I got

up and went once more out of the tent for a cool breath.

It was almost immediately that my attention was attracted to a queer-looking object lying on the desert to the East of our camp, near a depression called The Wells. A few low trees and camel thorns grew there, but I did not remember this particular boulder, for such it appeared.

Perhaps, I thought frivolously, some feverish, bespectacled antiquarian dug it up and left it after he had removed the ancient scarab it concealed. The place invited exploration. I decided to walk out to it.

I had gone about half of the distance between the camp and the desert stone when I was brought to a standstill so suddenly that my vertebrae tweaked. With a slow, clumsy twitch the thing had rolled jerkily over once, then all was still. The sands were silent, with only a desert's silence. No human was awake but myself. I was perfectly well; it was no hallucination. This object of my stroll had turned over, unaided by human hands. And more, as it turned I could have sworn it emitted radiant flashes as of diamonds in a basis of gold. My breath came short and hard, my eyes were strained from their sockets — I wanted a little more assurance that I was looking upon a phenomenon. I had not long to wait. The gorgeous apparition turned again and, slowly acquiring a regular motion, came directly toward me. Its revolutions dazzled my eyes as the light of the moon caught the fire of the jewels. Fear and wonder transfixed me while an icy grasp enveloped my arms and legs. I seemed to be freezing with horror — and the ball was gaining speed, fairly whirling toward me, aflame with its own splendor.

Suddenly my paralysis dropped away. Self-preservation sent me running at my highest speed across the hot earth. I believed it was a small celestial body that would kill us with fire or smother us with its poisonous gases. Musa, my good guide, slept by my door. I must warn him of this approaching doom. I was breathless and could not call out. I was tiring — and that horrible thing just behind me. I staggered against the first tent prop and looked back to gauge the distance between myself and this messenger of death, when a brain-storm seized me. My hand sought my head, there was something vaguely familiar about the

shape and swift tumbling motion of the body. A picture of The States and a stage flashed through my mind. At this moment the little demon of brilliance swerved from its direct course.

Fear left me. I was trying to remember the faint likeness. Ah! I had it! The contortionists! A tumbler! I was about to congratulate myself when the pathos of it struck me, for the ball had stopped beside the tiny grave and the dancing woman was alone with her dead. The red costume with its million spangles and cheap stones had served her well. Had cruel Haji seen the fiery ball he would have fallen on his face and implored the sun god to remove this sign of withering drouth. She had planned cautiously.

I went noiselessly into my house of cloth. I know not how long she remained or how she went away. I was only too grateful that the greedy love of adventure had not quite led me into betraying tender mother love.

The Vanishing Diplomat.*

BY HARRY VAN DEMARK.

THOUGH Lieutenant Peyton Rackworth was the youngest man in the British diplomatic service that did not deter his friends from singing his praises. Possessed of a healthy, vigorous mind, well-tuned to the vibrations of a magnificent physique, he was a man upon whom women gazed in admiration and men in envy.

On the ninth of March, 1908, he left Hong Kong in the steamship *Vandalasia,* with orders to proceed to Winnipeg, where he would be met by Captain Alwyn Damon, also in the service of his majesty's government, who would relieve him of certain papers relating to the unpopularity of the Anglo-Japanese alliance among the English of the Orient. In view of the fact that relations between the United States and Japan were strained almost to the breaking point, the papers were deemed unusually important.

Exactly ten days and a few hours later he landed in Vancouver, where he reported to the British authorities, and shook the hand of an old chum, Charles Warnley, whom he had not seen since his senior year at Oxford. He left at two o'clock in the afternoon for Winnipeg.

Having taken berth eight on a Pullman sleeper, he retired at nine o'clock. At ten-thirty the negro porter answered his ring and fetched him a glass of water. At midnight the bell in the porter's quarters tinkled again, registering from the same berth —lower eight. The darkey hurried to obey the summons, for the lieutenant had been lavish with his tips. Reaching the berth, he spoke to Rackworth, and failing to get an answer, spoke again; still receiving no response, he parted the curtains and looked into the berth, which he saw to be empty.

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He reported the matter to the Pullman conductor, who made an investigation. Before the investigation was over, every passenger in the car had been routed from his berth; but none could shed any light on Lieutenant Rackworth's disappearance. No one had seen him after he retired. Among the passengers were a Jewish merchant, the advance representative of a traveling theatrical troupe, and a little Jap, all of whom seemed highly indignant that they should have had their slumber disturbed for what they termed so insignificant a matter.

The car was searched high and low, but no trace of the Englishman was discovered. It was then suggested that he had probably dressed and gone forward into the smoker; but the porter pulled aside the curtains of berth eight, revealing the lieutenant's clothes — beyond all question the suit he had worn when last seen — as mute evidence to the contrary. At any rate, the porter had been in the front end of the car. He had not slept a wink, and no one could have passed him unobserved. Had the lieutenant, then, not gone into a coach to the rear? The conductor replied to this query by saying that this was the last car on the train; furthermore, he, the conductor, had just been writing just inside the rear door, and no one had passed him.

The windows of berth eight were found upon examination to be securely fastened on the inside, instantly doing away with the theory that Rackworth had met his fate by falling from the swiftly-moving train, which had not paused in its flight since leaving a small watering place — Harley's Gulch — in the late afternoon. At that time Lieutenant Rackworth had been sitting in the car perusing the pages of a magazine.

The lieutenant had disappeared as completely and mysteriously as if he had dissolved into thin air, and it was with a feeling akin to awe that the passengers again sought their berths.

Morning shed no light on the situation. The lieutenant's Gladstone bag, packed to the brim with toilet articles and clean linen, was reposing under berth eight where the porter had placed it the night before. It showed no evidence of having been tampered with.

After a short consultation the matter was telegraphed to Inspector Graham of the Winnipeg police, though just what he

was expected to do in advance of the train's arrival was not apparent.

. . . . . .

Mr. Colgate Barker, known in police circles by the sobriquet of "Captain Cool," on account of the many escapades through which he had passed unharmed while a member of the Chicago detective force, ascended the steps leading to Inspector Graham's office, was admitted, and warmly welcomed by the latter.

"I had heard you were in the city," said the inspector, "and was about to send for you."

"Anticipating that my services might be useful, I have called of my own free will," responded Captain Cool, smiling lazily as he leaned back in his chair and blew great clouds of smoke from his cigar.

"Then you have heard — ?"

"Of the disappearance of Lieutenant Rackworth? Yes."

"Well, now, if a big sum of money would be any inducement to you — "

"My dear fellow, you cannot buy my services. I am in Winnipeg on purely private business; but this mystery has piqued me. I have had Bob out all the morning."

"Ah — then you have a theory?"

"Well, I don't mind admitting that I have formed an opinion."

"May I inquire —— ?"

"Pardon me if I say nothing until I have seen Bob again."

"Oh, that's all right, captain, only — er — ahem! — I suppose you have inspected the Pullman car?"

"Yes."

"You known, then, that there was no way for the Englishman to get off that train?"

"In answer to that I shall merely apply the rule of common sense. If he wasn't in the car, he must have been out of it. We know that he was in the car at ten-thirty, and we are just as sure that he was not in it at midnight. So he got out — that point is clear."

There was no mistaking the detective's earnestness. It lurked

in the very poise of his head, the squareness of his shoulders, the sharpness of his features.

"But," persisted Graham, "there were men at both doors, and the windows were fastened on the inside."

"Granted. Yet he left the car by means of the window."

"Why do you say that he went through the window?"

"Because he could have left the train in no other manner without being observed."

"Can you prove this?"

"I hope to prove it to your satisfaction within an hour."

There suddenly sounded a tumultuous rush into the corridor, rapid feet clattered up the stairs to the accompaniment of many voices, and then a youth of perhaps twenty years, bareheaded and dishevelled, burst into the room.

Captain Cool seemed in no way disturbed by this unceremonious entry, but favored the newcomer with a frigid stare.

"Well, Bob?" he inquired, taking the cigar from his mouth and allowing his tilted chair to rest easily on the floor.

"I've spotted him, sir," said the boy, breathlessly; "but I think he's about to leave the city. I heard him asking in the hotel office what time the next train went west."

"Where is he?"

"There, sir." Bob handed his employer a card.

"Graham, will you perform a service for me?" The detective turned to the inspector.

"Certainly."

"Send a man to Hotel Dale, then, and arrest a Jap who is registered under the name of K. Kishyoma. Have them hold his baggage till further notice."

"What charge?"

"Conspiracy to abduct Lieutenant Rackworth."

"What!"

"And when you have him," Captain Cool went on, ignoring Graham's surprise, "bring him here. I have something to say to him."

The inspector looked wonderingly at his visitor, but pressed a button and summoned a deputy.

"Go up to Hotel Dale, Morgan, and arrest that party," he or-

dered, handing the man the card, "and when you get him, bring him here."

"How do you know this Jap is implicated?" asked Graham, when Morgan had departed, taking Bob with him.

"Because he was on the train the night Rackworth disappeared."

"What! Why, I didn't know that."

"Shows there was something lacking in your investigation," returned the detective, in the most matter-of-fact tone.

"What had the Jap against Rackworth?"

"Rackworth carried papers which would have raised merry Ned had they been allowed to reach England."

"You seem to have a way of picking up threads without clues."

"Yet I merely interviewed Captain Alwyn Damon and formed my conclusions on the basis of common sense."

"Who is Captain Alwyn Damon?" queried Graham, blankly.

"The man Rackworth was to meet in Winnipeg — the man who was to take the papers and carry them on to London. I saw him at the train. The questions he asked the conductor led me to believe him deeply interested, so I introduced myself. He took me into his confidence enough to — well, enough to prove conclusively to my mind that the Japs were responsible for Rackworth's disappearance."

"But would Japan be justified in antagonizing her new ally to that extent?"

"Not openly; but had the scheme gone through as they planned it, no one would have been the wiser."

"Have they murdered Rackworth, do you think?"

"No. Had they contemplated such a thing they would have killed him in his berth, instead of abducting him."

"You seem very much in earnest about your abduction theory; but for the life of me I can't see how the Japs could have taken Rackworth through that window and fastened it on the inside, and how, even had they been able to accomplish such an impossible feat, they could have alighted safely from a train moving at a speed of forty miles an hour."

"You have forgotten that the little Jap, Kishyoma, could have

fastened the window on the inside before the absence of Rackworth was discovered. As to the mode of leaving the train, I'll have something to say about that later."

"Well, heaven knows, I wish you luck, but, if I didn't know your reputation for apprehending criminals, I should say you were crazy to advance such theories as these."

"My theories sound strange and unreal to you, Graham, because you have not yet got into my scientific way of reasoning. At no time do I enter the realm of conjecture — where even the most logical mind may be at fault — but simply form my hypothesis upon the only thing that could have happened under the circumstances."

"'The only thing that could have happened under the circumstances?'" repeated Graham, vaguely.

"Ah, my dear fellow, that sounds indefinite, does it not? Yet it is a rule that rarely fails me."

"Well, here's our man, unless he's given them the slip," said the inspector as footsteps sounded in the corridor. Then the door was flung open and Bob and Morgan came in, the Jap between them.

The Oriental eyed his captors calmly, shifting his gaze from them to the inspector and thence to Captain Cool, where he allowed it to remain an instant. Then he shrugged his shoulders and smiled, calmly, inscrutably.

Captain Cool moved deliberately around where he might view the left side of the prisoner's head.

"Yes — I thought so. You are Adashi Nankanomi, who gave Uncle Sam a deal of trouble last year by prying into his secrets, and, unless I am greatly mistaken, you're going to answer to his majesty, King Edward, for a similar offence. Were you on the Canadian express the night Lieutenant Rackworth disappeared?"

The Jap gave the detective a defiant look, then shrugged his shoulders again, but said nothing.

"Mr. Cutter, the Pullman conductor, is in the corridor, inspector. Will you have him brought in?"

"Certainly, Captain, certainly."

"Now look at this man keenly, Mr. Cutter," said Captain Cool, when the conductor stood before him. "Is he the man who

traveled in your car from Vancouver and complained that his slumbers were disturbed?"

"Yes, sir, that's the man."

"You are positive?"

"I'd stake my life on it."

"Thank you, that is all," and Mr. Cutter seemed glad to escape. The detective turned to Kishyoma again.

"Let me freshen your memory a little," said he. About ten days ago the secret agents of Japan in Vancouver, yourself among them, received a cablegram from one of your men in Hong Kong, telling you to intercept certain dispatches carried by Lieutenant Rackworth, who was sailing that day on the *Vandalasia*. You were thus able to lay the plans of an ingenious scheme. Lieutenant Rackworth was so unprepared for your audacious move, that he proved a comparatively easy victim. Not satisfied with securing the papers, you decided to get the lieutenant out of the way, knowing that if the news of your robbery reached London it would precipitate a — well, an unpleasantness. Lieutenant Rackworth struggled fiercely for a moment, but could make no outcry, you having foreseen this emergency, by gagging him. Finally, pulling a knife from your pocket, and raising it above your helpless victim, you plunged — "

"No, no!" said the Jap in staccato tones. "He is not dead!"

"Thank you," said Captain Cool. "That's all I wanted to know." He nodded to the inspector.

"Lock him up," directed the latter, and Kishyoma was led from the room. As soon as the door was closed and they were alone, the detective turned again to Graham.

"Now, if you have a couple of reliable men, inspector, — men who will fight at the drop of a hat — and who can go immediately to the Canadian Rockies, I think you can wind this case up in short order"

"I can spare Morgan and Connolly — but what do you expect them to do?"

"They will alight at a little watering place known as Devil's Knoll, on the eastern slope of the mountains, and work on foot toward the crest, keeping an eye out for trouble. At some point in this vicinity the Japs have a secret rendezvous."

"What! a rendezvous in the Dominion?"

"Surely. I don't believe they will attempt violence on men known to have gone into the mountains, and who could be traced, yet it is best to go prepared."

"How long have you known of this?"

"What? The rendezvous? Oh, for some time. I have said nothing, feeling that sooner or later the Japs would do something to give us a hold on them, and now my suspicions are verified. This will mean the breaking up of the band, and it will hit them hard, Graham, for from these mountains they have sent spies into all parts of the United States, as well as your own dominion."

"And when we find the rendezvous — ?"

"Your men will release Rackworth," said Captain Cool.

"You mean that Rackworth is there — a prisoner?"

"Surely. This was a case of abduction — abduction as a natural shield for one of the most daring robberies I have ever heard of. You see, they were afraid to kill Rackworth, and they were afraid to turn him loose, minus the papers. So they hit upon a happy medium."

"Well, admitting all that to be true, you haven't explained how the Japs got Rackworth off of a train running at a speed of forty miles an hour."

"Oh, that's the easiest part of the problem, my dear fellow."

"Well, I can't quite see it," growled Inspector Graham.

"We know very well, Graham, that it would have been an impossible feat to have taken a man from a train going at that speed. Then what follows? Why, the train must have slowed down at some point on the slope of the Rockies. Hand me that map over there. Now, see here! Imagine we are traveling eastward from Vancouver. Here is Harley's Gulch, the little watering place at the foot of the western slope. That's where we begin our ascent. Here, then, over half way down the eastern slope, is Devil's Knoll. Somewhere between those points Lieutenant Rackworth disappeared. When the train left Harley's Gulch, remember, he was sitting in the sleeper, reading a magazine. His berth had not been made up. When the train stopped at Devil's Knoll, he had been missed for over an hour. At this point, then, say midway between the watering tanks, the ascent is steepest,

and no wonder, for when the train passes over the crest of the Rockies it is many thousands of feet above the level of the sea. Common sense tells us, then, that no speed of forty miles could be attained while negotiating that western slope; on the contrary, there are points where a six-mile speed would be considered a piece of luck. So far, so good. Now, we know that Pullman car windows cannot be opened from without; we know, also, that Kishyoma couldn't pull off a deal like this alone; we know the Japs have a rendezvous near the apex of the range; and — well, don't you see the connection?"

"Yes; you figure that, it being dark, some of Kishyoma's comrades met the train at this spot."

"Not necessarily. Let us say, rather, that there was a Jap in one of the coaches farther forward. Let us say, merely for the sake of argument, that he had in his satchel a finely-woven net, such as fishermen use for their small casts. Instead of having weights at intervals around the outer edge, there are ropes running from these spots into a group; or, to be plainer, picture in your mind a parachute, with the ropes hanging downward, all converging toward the center. Now, turn it over, so you have an inverted parachute, and you'll catch my idea, I think. Well, the train is approaching the summit of the range; it is moving slowly; a Jap comes stealthily out of the car immediately ahead of the sleeper in which are Rackworth and Kishyoma; he has this net. By aid of the brake and iron work on the platform, he crawls to the top of the Pullman, thence along the roof until he is directly over berth eight. Kishyoma, remember, is in upper eight, over Rackworth. He hears a preconceived signal on the roof, which he answers by rapping on the woodwork inside. From that minute it is a comparatively easy matter to put their plan into execution. Kishyoma slips easily down into lower eight, inside the curtains, gagging Rackworth before he is sufficiently awake to make an outcry, and forcing his continued silence by means of a revolver. Then, after feeling through the lieutenant's underclothes, to make sure that the papers are not concealed in some secret pocket, he forces Rackworth to raise the window and crawl into the net, promising that no harm is intended. The train is moving at a snail's pace, the danger reduced to a minimum, and

Rackworth sees the folly of resistance. Once he is in the net, the window is closed and fastened on the inside by Kishyoma, who searches the lieutenant's clothes and finds the papers, — but accidentally touches the button which rings the porter's bell, — and crawls back into upper eight, just in time to turn out when the other passengers are aroused by the Pullman conductor. In the meantime, Rackworth is lowered little by little until the net is but a foot or so above the ground; then, finally, he feels himself swinging out, and falls into the soft grass of the railroad ditch uninjured. The little Jap crawls down from the roof, swings himself off the platform, assumes charge of his prisoner, whom he knows to be unarmed, and leads him to the rendezvous, and — well, there's an end to your mystery."

Captain Cool, a half-cynical smile playing about his mouth, leaned against the inspector's roll-top desk and casually relit his cigar.

"Good heavens, man! you act as if solving such a mystery were the most insignificant thing in the world," cried the inspector, in admiration. "I know now why they call you Captain Cool."

"You flatter me, Graham," laughed the detective.

"Say, but that was a clever thing — that net business," said Graham, smiling at the recollection.

"Yes; an admirable and unique contrivance for the purpose, we must admit. There's genius in it, my dear fellow; for who would expect a man to vanish from a moving train by means of a fish net?"

"No one but you, captain, would have entertained such an idea for a moment. Yes, yes — I see where you get your reputation."

"Oh, my dear fellow ——" began Captain Cool, with a gesture of restraint.

"Oh, I know — now," Graham interrupted. "If I find that this is true — and it all looks plausible — I'll never doubt your word again, no matter what you tell me. But it sounds like a fairy tale."

"Yet it happened just as I have related it, except possibly, for a few minor details. For instance, there might have been

two Japs on the top of the car instead of one. But you will find the facts essentially as I have told them to you."

"And now about the papers, captain ——"

"Oh, yes, the papers! You will find them either on Kishyoma, or among his effects at the hotel — more likely the latter."

"By jove! I'll wager you're right. I'll stand you a bully supper for this."

"Sorry I won't be here to enjoy it; I leave for Chicago to-night."

"But suppose we trip up on this rendezvous business?"

"Oh, that's your lookout, you know. I've told you where your man is. It's up to your men to find him. In other words, I've supplied the brains; now you supply the brawn."

As he went out a moment later, Graham was sitting in his desk chair, his mouth half-open in astonishment.

. . . . . .

When Lieutenant Rackworth was discovered in a cave in the Canadian Rockies by Morgan and Connolly, he confirmed, in practically every particular, the story of Captain Cool. A single Jap had been left to guard him, and he fled at the officers' approach.

The papers were found among Kishyoma's effects in Hotel Dale and placed in the hands of Captain Alwyn Damon, at Rackworth's request, and the matter of reporting the case to the British government was also left to him.

And when Captain Cool, already engaged in solving a new mystery on the great lakes, received Graham's telegram of congratulation, he merely smiled. The next minute the matter of the vanishing diplomat had been banished from his mind.

For the Sake of Toodleums.*

BY HAROLD KINSABBY.

OW, Bert, listen," said Mrs. Rodney, taking her brother into full confidence. "I want to talk to you. Tom is really the best husband that ever was. Of course I've never had another husband, but just think how he adores our baby — our Toodleums!"

Bert Loring glanced at his sister's face to gather that the last remark was as a gold seal on her husband's virtues. She was young, pretty, and winsome. She was also Loring's only sister. Nevertheless he rubbed his chin a trifle doubtfully, for Rodney was a sad failure in a business sense.

"Oh, well," he returned at last. "Since you say so, I presume that settles the matter. You ought to know, Mary. Personally, I've nothing against Tom."

"No," she affirmed decisively. "No one could help liking Tom. He's just the most lovable fellow imaginable, so generous and kind-hearted toward every one."

"Um — er — Oh yes!" nodded the brother. "There's no question about Tom's generosity."

He was thinking of the last occasion when he chanced upon Tom downtown. With great cordiality Tom invited him to lunch. It was a capital lunch, too, nothing wanting, only — somehow Tom found it was unfortunately necessary to borrow five dollars to pay for it. He had forgotten to drop in at his bankers, By Golly! That was a joke on Tom, at which he laughed in the utmost good nature. His wife was quite right when she spoke of his kindly disposition toward every one. The waiter's smile bore witness to it, when helping to adjust Tom's overcoat. Loring went out with his overcoat collar bracing his ears. So much for the waiter's discernment.

"But, you see, Bert," explained Mrs. Rodney, "Tom's only

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drawback is that he has never been given a chance to prove what he is really worth. He's wonderfully bright."

"As bright as a new five dollar gold piece," subconsciously acquiesced the brother. He was still thinking of the lunch.

"And ambitious for bigger things," added Mrs. Rodney.

"I don't doubt it," nodded her brother. It occurred to him that Tom was capable of *ordering* a mighty fine dinner.

"Then, Bert, why don't you get him a good position in your insurance office?"

"What!" he cried. "Pardon me, Mary, I didn't quite—"

"Hush!" she laid a finger on her lips. "Don't be so noisy, Bert. You'll wake Toodleums. Yes," she went on in an undertone, "a good position in your insurance office. One in which Tom could shine and Toodleums feel proud of his Dada. You know how attached you are to Toodleums—the precious!"

"Yes, but you see, Mary," her brother began to protest, "the shining positions in our office are pretty well all occupied. I don't glitter much yet, and I've been years climbing up from the bottom."

"But Tom is so brilliant—such a fine talker," declared Mrs. Rodney enthusiastically. "If he were once given the chance he would jump right up to the top. Everybody likes him."

"Well, our president has been pretty good to me," he remarked. "I'd really hate to see him lose his job—I mean within the next few weeks—even on Tom's account."

"Bert, don't be ridiculous and sarcastic. Toodleums—the love—does not like people who are sarcastic."

"No, probably not. But honestly, Mary, you must see what I mean. If I got Tom a position in our office, he would have to take his chance with the rest. But, as you say, he is a good talker, and might do pretty well in outside work."

"Then you will introduce him to your president?"

Her face lit up with pride at the success of her plan to obtain a position for her husband.

"I'll put him in line to show what he's made of. That's all I can promise at present."

"Then you may kiss Toodleums," she added by way of great reward.

She rose and moved softly toward a lace ruffled and beribboned shrine.

"And be careful, Bert," she enjoined, "you don't stumble over something and wake the sweetest. You are so clumsy in comparison with Tom."

Loring faithfully kept the promise to his sister. He first spoke with Tom, pointing out the excellent chances for a good talker in the insurance business, and the agreeable nature of outside work. For the right man it might lead to the confidence of millionaires, and the friendship of United States Senators. Tom was quite enthusiastic.

"Just the thing," he cried, slapping Loring on the shoulder. "The very position I've been looking for. Don't worry about the beginning at the bottom of the ladder idea. I'll climb up hand over fist. You watch me."

So Loring introduced his brother-in-law to the chief of the proper department, and with him Tom talked with much enthusiasm of purpose. He was finally told to report the next morning, when full instructions would be given. He was in such high feather on the way home that he bought a silver rattle for Toodleums — on credit.

His conference with the chief of his department the next morning was satisfactory in all respects. He appeared to grasp quickly the details of the various insurance policies, and spoke confidently of what he intended to do with the list of prominent citizens he was instructed to call upon.

"Mr. Vandermorgan. Sure! I'll touch him for a $100,000 policy right away. If I clean him up before lunch, I guess that would be doing something."

"I guess it would," agreed the chief, who knew how for many months they had fished unsuccessfully for Mr. Vandermorgan.

So Tom gathered up his papers and strode briskly out of the office. He took the elevator with the air of a man who talked in nothing less than six figures. Then he went out and walked around the block. When he came back to the majestic portals of the Long Life Building he paused to reflect. An idea seemed to occur to him. That it was a corking idea, the pleased expression on his face indicated. He again took the elevator, and was shot

up to the floor on which his brother-in-law's office was located.

"Hello, Bert!" he greeted, looking in at the door.

"Hello, Tom! How's business? How are you getting along?"

"Fine! Just going out to tackle Vandermorgan."

"Good! Hope you'll land him."

"Yes," Tom proceeded, drawing a chair up to his brother-in-law's desk, and spreading out his papers. "But I thought I'd have a talk with you first."

"Well, go ahead. Glad to help out in any way possible."

"Yes, that's just what I thought. Now, see here, Bert, how about your taking out one of our ten-thousand-dollar policies?"

"What!" cried Loring, falling back in his chair. "Man alive! What on earth do I want with a ten-thousand-dollar policy?"

"That's the point. That's just what I want to talk to you about," argued Tom complacently. "Every man ought to provide for the comfort and happiness of his wife after his death. That's about how the chief said I might begin."

"But you know I haven't got a wife," protested Loring.

"Well, that doesn't alter the case. Those near and dear to you will do as well," went on Tom sympathetically. "Those attached to you by the strongest ties."

"By the strongest ties?" questioned Loring.

"Sure! There are Mary and little Toodleums. As you are going to be Toodleums' godfather do it for the sake of Toodleums. I'll just fill out an application in his favor. Of course we'd hate for anything unfortunate to happen to you, but every man should make a suitable provision for those who are dear to him. The chief said that phrase usually catches on."

"Well, I'll be hanged!" ejaculated Loring.

"I sincerely hope not," fervently added Tom, as he prepared to fill out an application blank. "Shall we make it twenty or thirty thousand dollars?" he asked, looking up calmly.

"Make it five and then go and chase Vandermorgan," retorted Loring, fearful that worse might happen.

"All right. Five thousand dollars in favor of Toodleums. See you later, Bert," and with a smile Tom strolled out of Loring's office to deposit the signed application with the proper clerk.

Suddenly he stopped, drew a pad and pencil from his pocket, and began figuring.

"By Jove," he exclaimed, "not a bad beginning! My commission on that policy is just $41 and I landed it in less than an hour. That's $328 a day, $1,968 a week, and ——"

His calculations were interrupted by Dick Willman, who grasped his hand and enquired: "How're you getting on, Tom, and where are you bound for? Bert tells me you've taken up life insurance."

"Congratulate me, old fellow. This very morning I dropped into a berth that pays me a hundred thousand a year. I'm through for to-day and am off for home to tell my wife. So long" —and Tom was gone.

He had not yet reached the elevator when he turned, called back to his friend, and going up to him, his face still wreathed in smiles, confided: "Dick, in my hurry to get down to business this morning I came away without even car fare. Loan me a five. Ah, thank you. And come have a bird and a bottle with me at the club to-morrow. Bye-bye," and once more Tom was on his way to carry the news to Mary.

"I knew it and always told people you would make good if you only had half a chance," interrupted his wife, as Tom triumphantly related his morning's success to her.

"Oh, yes," agreed the husband. "I know how to get there all right. By the way, how's Toodleums and how does he like his new rattle?"

The Winner of the Trophy Cup.*

BY MABEL KITTREDGE STEARNS.

"I'M sure I don't at all understand it," said pretty little Mrs. Fitzgerald. "How can our boys even hope to win, when they have such a small class?"

"It isn't the number, Carol," volunteered Mrs. George, "it's the percentage."

She was a tall, business-like woman, whose husband was the secretary of the ten-year class, and, of course, she understood all about the race for the trophy cup, and had great faith in his ability to pull '98 through as the winner.

But her young cousin either could not or would not understand, and sat with her fair brow wrinkled and lips screwed up in a pettish little pout. She preferred a masculine explanation of the affair, being one of those women who delight in a show of ignorance, when in the presence of the dominant sex.

Mr. Fitzgerald and two other men now joined the group of women under the trees, and the conversation turned, as usual, on the coming contest, the greatest excitement of Commencement week.

The '98 "Headquarters" was very gay. It consisted of two large houses, decorated with purple and white bunting, and many flags and lanterns. The scene was made more picturesque by the costumes of the men, which embraced long purple coats, white hats with purple streamers, and white duck trousers.

It was at the very beginning of the festivities, being the Saturday afternoon before Commencement. Alumni, of all ages and all classes, were arriving on every train and trolley. Automobiles were flying back and forth, carrying their gay loads of men, women and children, and, even now, picking its straggling way across the campus, could be seen a party of men, a band, the especial property, for the time being, of the ten-year class.

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"Which is our worst rival, Mr. George?" asked one of the women. "Is it the five, or the fifteen-year class?"

"Oh, I think '93, without doubt. They'll give us a hot race for it," and Harold George bit the end of his cigar rather savagely.

He was very eager, boyishly so, perhaps, to have his class win the beautiful trophy cup, and he had worked hard with this end in view, but the outcome was still doubtful.

"I wouldn't care so much," he went on, "only they're so cock sure of getting it. They've a big illuminated sign they're going to use in the parade to-night, '93 Sure Winner,' and another, 'Where is '98'?"

"Well, I think it'll be just mean, if we don't win," said Mrs. Fitzgerald, "though I don't at all understand what you mean by the 'largest percentage' and all that."

Whereupon the three men began to explain, all at once, which was just what the little lady wished. Having gained their attention, she kept it exclusively for some time; and, when at last one of the women rose to go in and dress for dinner, Mrs. Fitzgerald followed reluctantly, saying as she waved an adieu to the men, "Then I don't see why one man couldn't win it, if he were alone in his class."

This remark seemed to give Harold George food for thought, and for the remainder of the evening, until the grand parade was well under way, his companions found him morose and taciturn, so much so, in fact, that they fell to teasing him not a little for taking the matter so to heart.

Sunday evening the campus was fairly quiet. So far it looked as if it would be a very close race between '93 and '98, but it was still rather early to prophesy. Harold George had been telegraphing and telephoning in every direction for more recruits, and some had responded bravely, but still others couldn't leave their business, or had a dozen and one other reasons which would keep them away. The Secretary was certainly anxious. He sat alone under a spreading oak, neath the very shadow of the beautiful church, and smoked, and smoked long, black cigars. Ever and anon there came into his eyes a strange light, and he would half start as if some one had spoken to him.

Here his older brother found him, and sat down to have a chat and smoke. Mr. George, senior, had come back for Commencement strictly on his own account. His class did not have a reunion for two years more, but many friends were here, and, as he often remarked, he felt "so deuced independent."

"How goes it?" he said, giving his brother's knee a familiar slap, as he stretched out on the cool ground beside him.

"Oh, hello — that you, Charlie? Why, we broke even at the last report, but to-morrow we shall make a great gain, if the fellows keep their promises. Hang it all, they only have to be in town long enough to register! But they're so deathly afraid they'll lose a cent if they leave their business long enough to let it cool."

"Perhaps some of them don't want the expense of the journey, Hal," said his brother, softly.

"Oh, I suppose that's it — but let's change the subject. I've thought of nothing else all day. What have you been up to, Charlie?"

"I? Why, I've just had the time of my life. I met Sempers, and Cross and some of those fellows, and we've been singing the good old songs, 'Pretty Flaxen Haired Maiden,' 'On the Chapel Steps,' and 'Schneider's Band.' We've been showing these youngsters what real singing is like."

"We had a good sing to-day, too," the younger man said, reflectively, "all the old favorites, you know, 'That Little Old Red Shawl,' 'Away, Away on the Bounding Wave,' and 'Star of the Evening.' The fellows nowadays don't seem to know much about singing."

This conversation was recalled, by one of the men at least, when at the Alumni dinner, he was thrilled and almost moved to tears by the wonderfully beautiful farewell song of the seniors. But there is a certain delicious egotism among College Alumni, which they themselves hardly realize. What was done in "our day," was always the best.

All through Monday, '98 made great gains, and the Secretary's exuberance knew no bounds. His beloved class was going to win; there was no doubt about it, and his tremendous efforts were to be rewarded. Several "Unexpecteds" had arrived. There was

"Snake" Jenkins, "Shorty" Fox, and even Bert Winslow, who had never been noted for class enthusiasm, even in College days.

Harold George was very hopeful, and confided his hopes to Mrs. Fitzgerald, who sat with him on the steps of one of the houses which had been chosen for the '98 "Headquarters."

It was evening, and most of the party had gone to the Senior Dramatics.

"Yes," Harold was saying, "I feel pretty sure of victory now."

Mrs. Fitzgerald gurgled sympathetically.

"Don't be too sure," said a voice and Dan Matthews, the handsome president of '93, sauntered up to the couple.

Strolling slightly behind him came his wife. "The most stunning woman on the grounds" as had been truthfully remarked. She was tall and stately and splendid, with black, snapping eyes, and a proud, determined little chin.

"'There's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip,'" continued Mr. Matthews genially, as he dropped on to the steps beside the others. "Come, Geraldine," holding out a hand to his wife, "You know Mrs. Fitzgerald, I'm sure. George, here, you know. Poor old fellow," patting that gentleman's head affectionately, "he's aging rapidly. One would never suppose him, however, to be all of forty-five," which continued chaffing Harold took good-naturedly, secure in his youthful looks and thirty-two years.

Mrs. Matthews, meanwhile, protested mildly that they must go on, murmuring something about being expected back at the "Headquarters." Her voice was low and silvery, but insistent, and her husband rose dutifully, though he remarked, facetiously, that he had been led around this way for the last ten years, and had quite lost his manhood. So, with good nights and parting sallies, they went on their way, leaving the couple on the steps, rather quiet and thoughtful.

"Do you know," mused Mrs. Fitzgerald, "it would be quite easy to guess the ages of this entire Commencement crowd. You all joke about being just ten years older than you actually are. Even the women have caught it. I heard Mrs. Matthews to-day say to one of those '98 men, 'You'd never take me for fifty, would you?' She knows she's young-looking for forty! They all do it. Even the old men of sixty or more pretend they're seventy

or eighty. Isn't it silly ? I suppose it makes them feel younger."

Harold George turned and looked at his companion with renewed interest. "What a keen little observer you are," he said, "But you know it's just a Commencement custom, a privilege of these days, one of the things you expect to hear, but no one pays much attention to it, one way or the other."

"I think," said Mrs. Fitzgerald irrelevantly, "that Mr. and Mrs. Matthews feel pretty sure they're going to win that cup, after all. Oh, isn't there some way to stop them, even if we can't win ?"

In the pale light from the swinging lantern, the man's face seemed to undergo a subtle change. A strange and ominous glitter came into his eyes, and the muscles of his mouth twitched spasmodically. But he laughed lightly, as he said, "Why, Carol Fitzgerald, you vindictive little woman. I'm ashamed of you."

Later, when he had bade her good-night, and gone off to have a quiet smoke, alone, he kept murmuring, "There is a way, there is a way, but I hope it won't be necessary."

Tuesday was a day of excitement. The Glee Club Concert ; speakings of every kind and description ; the Senior gambols on the campus ; the ball game with W————, won by the home team at a close score of 2—1 ; the antics of the Alumni at said game, in which '98, with the irrepressible Harold George at their head, carried off the honors, and then the evening, and the gloriously successful lawn fête!

The soft, mild air of a warm June night ; the campus with its myriads of electric lights, transformed into a veritable fairyland; the beautiful, glistening cross, nestling in the ivy of the church wall ; the magnificent band from New York City, very proud in their immaculate uniforms of white duck ; the Alumni booths, from which rang song and laughter ; the gay hats and dresses of the women, and, above all, the feeling of good fellowship, combined to make this the crowning event of Commencement week.

Carol Fitzgerald was in a tremor of excitement. Not content with "receiving" in the '98 booth, with the other "wives," she wanted to be everywhere at once and had persuaded Harold George to take her "sight-seeing."

In the '85 booth there was great excitement ! Votes were being cast by the women for the "Handsomest Man."

"Vote for me! Vote for me," cried one veteran, whose shock of iron-gray hair gave him a decided advantage over his less fortunate classmates.

"You ought to win; you're so anxious for it," laughed a woman, and the coal black eyes of the enthusiastic contestant twinkled back at her with merriment.

In '90, the famous quartette of college days was singing, as only they could sing, the good old songs. Harold and his girl companion, momentarily, joined the little group of listeners, but the words he had just heard were hauntingly insistent. "You ought to win; you're so anxious for it." How true, in his case. How foolishly anxious he was. And it looked so favorable to-night!

He felt his companion tugging at his arm. "Take me over to hear the band now," she commanded. "There go those two people I hate."

He turned quickly, just in time to catch a fleeting, almost triumphant smile, on the face of Dan Matthews ere it was lost in the crowd.

It was just at this juncture that George felt a touch on his arm, and turning, faced his brother.

"I'd like a word with you, Hal, if Mrs. Fitzgerald will excuse you for a few moments," and then addressing himself to her, he continued, "Shall we take you back to the '98 booth? Your husband is there, I think."

Mrs. Fitzgerald frowned, like the spoiled little woman she was, and said petulantly, "I don't want to go. I want to hear the band."

"Then shall I bring your husband here?" said Mr. George, senior, with a touch of firmness in his voice, and a trace of anxiety on his face.

"No, you needn't do that, either. There are Mr. and Mrs. Brewster. I'll join them."

"Well all right, Carol. I'll be back soon and hunt you up," Harold called after her vanishing little figure, and then, turning suddenly to his brother, he said eagerly, "What's up?"

"The Devil's up, I guess. Come away and I'll tell you what I've just heard."

The brothers walked off, arm in arm, and once away from the

noise and glare, the older man said, "It may not be true, but I hear that '93 has twelve more men coming on the eleven o'clock to-morrow morning. They'll get here in plenty of time to register, and go over to the dinner.

"Oh, Hell!" ejaculated Harold, "then it's all up! Twelve men — why I couldn't scare up two more, if I dragged them here by the hair of their heads!"

He looked so crestfallen, disappointed and truly unhappy, that his brother patted his arm, affectionately, and said, "Don't take it so to heart, Hal. After all, what earthly difference does it make? It's just for the fun of the thing, anyway. You haven't lost a thousand dollars."

"Oh, it isn't that, Charlie, it's — Look here, I've a plan, and I want your help." He lowered his voice and spoke rapidly, and with a certain eager insistence, as if doubting the other's approval.

His brother said not a word, but, once, a long, low whistle escaped him, and when Harold at last ceased speaking, with the question, "Well, old man, are you in?" he answered, promptly, with a vigorous shake of his hand, "In, heart and soul, to the very finish. It's simply stupendous. I wonder some one hasn't thought of it before. Whatever put the idea into your head?"

"Oh, that's another story," said Harold, thoughtfully.

When they parted for the night (Harold not having once thought of his promise to Mrs. Fitzgerald), it was with the agreement that they should hover around at the arrival of the eleven o'clock train in the morning, and, if those twelve men came — then — !

As the train puffed and roared into the station, a number of men standing on the platform began to shout and jump and wave their hats and hands excitedly. For, there, descending from the steps of the rear car, came, one after another, twelve members of the class of '93!

Headed by a band, playing triumphant airs, and joined, at the bridge, by the entire class, they marched gaily up the street to what, they thought, was a sure victory.

But, speeding southward, half lost in a cloud of dust, was a large touring car containing two men, the elder driving, and at a furious rate.

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But, speeding southward, half lost in a cloud of dust, was a large touring car containing two men, the elder driving, and at a furious rate.

During the early part of the Alumni dinner, one or two had noticed, and remarked upon, the absence of Harold George, but had laid it to the fact that he was really too sore over the matter to wish to be present at the triumph of '93.

The President of the College rose; in his hands the magnificent trophy cup. A sudden silence fell on that vast audience, and, even before the actual calling of his name, the president of '93 rose too.

At this moment tnere was a slight commotion at the door. A boy entered, and made his way towards the head table, where he handed the president a slip of paper. On it were written a few words which puzzled that worthy gentleman momentarily. Then he coughed slightly, raised his eyes, and spoke with slow, crisp distinctness to the waiting throng.

"A moment please. There seems to have been a mistake. This — er — note has just come to me from the 'Registry Headquarters.' The Winner of the Trophy Cup is not, as we had supposed, the class of '93," here the president bowed, almost apologetically, to the man who still stood, almost statuesque in his arrogant beauty, and then continued, "Not the class of '93, but — Ah, here he comes."

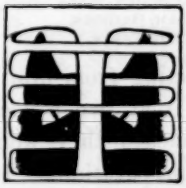
All eyes turned to the door, as there entered, alone, a very old man. In his uplifted hand he carried a white pennant, on which were the numbers "'42." He marched slowly and majestically up the length of the long room, between rows of breathless alumni. In his clear blue eyes, there was a merry little twinkle, and the corners of his mouth twitched. It was evident that he was enjoying the situation to its utmost.

Reaching the head table he stopped and bowed low.

The President returned the bow with dignity, and raising his voice to a clearness which could be heard in every corner of that vast hall, said, "Gentlemen, I have the honor of presenting the Alumni Trophy Cup to the Reverend Horace Greenleaf Pike, sole surviving member of the class of '42!"

Man's Hidden Heart.*

BY HUBERT HAINES.



HE two men stood by the pile of "grout," as the refuse from a copper mine is called, and glared at each other with looks that would kill if hate could be molded into bullets. They were young miners, lean, deep-chested, iron-sinewed fellows in their mid-twenties, with hands and faces stained by the reek of the mine, and perspiration from the fierce heat of the noon sun flowing in little beds of white across swart cheeks and foreheads. Carrying dinner-pails they were making for the shade of the engine-house to eat luncheon, when here on the grout-pile they decided to have it out.

The quarrel began months before in a trifling jealousy over their workmanship; it had been kept alive and intensified by tale-bearers; and recently it had been inflamed to danger-temperature when into their field of rivalry came a woman. This very morning they had fought down in the mine, and the foreman, after he had torn them apart and emptied on them the vials of his profanity, had assigned them to different crews. Within the hour Fate brought them together on the grout-pile.

"'Pears to me, Sam Glidden, like you and me had better end this thing right now."

"Whenever you say the word, Ned Terry. You won't have to call twice when you want me. To-night if you say so."

"No," said Terry, "not to-night — now. When to-night comes it must be settled for good and all. If you're a man get your rifle and drive out with me to Nivo hill. There'll be nobody to disturb us there and one of us must never come back."

"I never refused a dare in my life, Terry, and I certainly won't refuse it from you. Let's write a paper right here to be opened two hours after we start so there'll be no suspicion of murder. Then get your wagon and I'll be on hand."

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Glidden, who was the better educated, sat down on the rough rocks, tore a page out of the blank-book in which he kept his "time," and wrote this:

> We, the undersigned, will start for Nivo hill at half past twelve to fight it out with rifles. It will be a fair fight, and the man that is left dead on Nivo wishes to state right now that he has no kick coming against the man that killed him.
>
> SAM GLIDDEN.
> NED TERRY.

This note they gave to the engineer after exacting from him a solemn promise that he would open and read it at two o'clock and not before. Then with dinner-pails untouched they went their several ways to make simple and deadly preparations. In thirty minutes they were both in Glidden's wagon headed for open country, their unloaded rifles tied together under the seat. Glidden drove. Terry sat on a gunny-sack in the rear. It would be a drive of an hour and a half to Nivo hill.

Never it seemed, had the sun been so furnace-hot as it was that day. The pitiless blaze made their heads reel as they jolted over the unshaded roads between dismal hills burned brown and bare. They rattled over crazy bridges, shambled down steep slopes, and toiled laboriously, drearily, up one ascent after another, the ancient nag looking at the end of each climb as though he must fall dead on the next. Midway of their journey they came to the bed of a stream through the rocks of which a thin ribbon of water barely made its way. They stopped. Glidden filled a tin cup and held it out to Terry.

"After you," said Terry.

"Go on!" ordered Glidden.

"Thanks!" said Terry.

They returned to the wagon and labored on again, each man living with his own thoughts — but thoughts of a common subject — where he would aim, how quickly he could fire, how he would see his rival stretched bleeding on the ground; or — on the other hand — how it would feel to have a cylinder of steel crashing through the brain, what kind of home a grave on these bleak Western hills would make, and what manner of place or existence is the hereafter, a hereafter for at least one of them only a few minutes away. Glidden thought of his mother in Massachusetts, and was suddenly startled at remembering that he had

given no one her address — if — if — anything should happen. He turned sharply to Terry.

"Say, Terry!"

"Well?"

"If you're the man to come out of this, write to my mother, will you, and try to break it a bit gently? I'll give you her address." He stopped the horse, took out pencil and time-book, and wrote: "Mrs. Samuel Glidden, ———— St., Lynn, Mass."

Terry took the paper. "Say, Glidden!"

"Yes?"

"If luck is with you, I wish you would drop a line to my sister. It's too late to ask any one else, now."

"All right!"

And Terry wrote on another sheet: "Miss Lucy Terry, ——— St., Cleveland, Ohio."

They drove on again. The furnace in the sky grew fiercer. The very air was too hot to breathe. It parched their throats and seemed to dry out the blood and moisture from their lungs. Terry held his hand to his temple to stop a throbbing as though the artery would tear itself loose. His head ached and specks floated before his eyes. He gave a convulsive start of terror when a deadly mountain adder sped across the dust of the road to escape the wheels.

Turning a bend of the road they saw Nivo hill two miles away. The sight of it braced them. Glidden cracked the whip over the horse and straightened up. Terry tightened his belt and wiped the perspiration from his hands. Fifteen minutes more! But Terry's hands were trembling uncontrollably. He spat out a rivulet of perspiration that had dropped into his mouth, and swore. How could he kill Sam Glidden with these quivering fingers and these darkening eyes? Well, let Sam Glidden kill him, he didn't care — he didn't care. He was going to sleep. He would drop over this precipice and —

Glidden heard him fall, jerked the horse to a stop, and flung himself over the seat. Terry was unconscious. Sweat was pouring down his face in streams, and in his look was a ghastly suggestion of death. "Hell! I've got to get him out of this sun," said Glidden. He lifted the limp body on brawny shoulders,

and struggled with it to such shade as a thicket of dwarfed hazelnut trees afforded. There he laid his burden down, ran to the wagon for the tin cup, and started back to the spring. "Poor devil! Funny how things work out," was his soliloquy.

In twenty minutes Glidden returned, holding a dock-leaf over the cup to keep the water as cool as might be. He left the roadside and was about to stride into the thicket where Terry lay, when his face went pale with sudden horror. Coiled beside the unconscious man was a mountain adder ready to spring. It had been gliding by doubtless when Terry made some convulsive movement that alarmed it. Now with head raised and immovable it was watching him. Another stir from Terry and the snake must strike. A deep moan came from the prostrate man. Not a second to lose! With a shout, Glidden dashed toward the snake, whirling a slender branch that he tore from a shrub. Down came the rod across the adder's back. But the weapon was too weak. In the twinkling of an eye the brown coil whirled along the length of the stick, and two fatal fangs were driven to the hilt in Glidden's wrist.

Not a cry came from the doomed man's lips. Half dazed he watched the snake disappear in the brush, looked at Terry who was now tossing restlessly, and then a faint shadow of a grim smile stirred the muscles of his mouth. His left hand still held the cup, and only a third of the water had been spilled. He dashed some of it in Terry's face. Terry's eyes opened for a moment and then closed, and he began to breathe stertorously.

"No good tryin' to tell him anything," said Glidden. He placed the cup on a level rock a few feet away, and lay down. The weakness was coming on. He closed his eyes. "Funny how things work out," he murmured. "Here I was goin' to kill Ned Terry, and now — Let's see! how does it go? 'He gave his life as a ransom.' That's it. Maybe he won't be hard on a feller. Our Father — "

Two hours later the party from the mine, led by the engineer, found them. Terry was holding an empty cup to Glidden's lips, and in delirium was calling: "Sam."

The Czar's Mince Pies.*

BY SEWELL FORD

[This story appeared in THE BLACK CAT eight years ago and is reprinted by request.]

IT was all quite abrupt. One day there had been Miss Barbara Staples contentedly sewing just where she had sat and sewed at intervals for fifteen years. On the swing shelf in the cellar there had been the pies — deep-pan pies, robust, plethoric, brown crusted, glorious to the eye and enticing to the palate.

Next day they were gone. Miss Barbara was gone, the pies were gone. No, the cat had not eaten the pies. The cat would have left the plates. From Miss Barbara there had been no word of farewell, no note of explanation. It must have been that she had risen early, packed an extension hand satchel, walked four miles to the station and taken the early train. But the pies ? It was not likely that they had evaporated, pans and all. It was more reasonable to suppose they had gone in the satchel.

Barton Centre, noting the absence of Miss Barbara — " Gritty " she was more commonly called — was mildly curious. Barton Centre rather expected the unconventional from " Gritty " Staples. There was cause for this. Miss Staples had not lived her thirty-five years passively. Her nickname had not come without reason. But when Mrs. Mary Hallowell, " Gritty's " married sister, had admitted Barbara's disappearance and given her explanation of it, the mild curiosity of Barton Centre burned hot with interest.

" All I know about it, " declared Mrs. Hallowell, " is what Gritty said when we finished making the mincemeat. It was a good lot, if I do say it. We both said so at the time. There was just enough apple to make it moist, just enough suet to make it rich, just enough cider to make it tart and just enough spices to

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season it right. Gritty tasted and said it was good enough for anybody in the world to eat. I tasted and said it was as good mincemeat as I'd ever put tongue to. At this Gritty spoke up kind of sharp. 'But *isn't* it good enough for anybody in the *world ?*'

"'Well,' says I, 'I shouldn't want to go so far as that. Some folks are mighty particular about pies.'

"'Who, for instance ?' says Gritty.

"'Well,' says I, 'there's the Czar of Russia.' Of course I was only joking, but Gritty never did have a sense of humor. She stood there holding the mixing spoon for a minute or so, and then she says, kind of decided like : 'I just guess,' said she, 'if the Czar of Russia could taste one of our mince pies, he would say he never eat anything better in his life.' Then we went ahead and poured the mincemeat into the crock, and nothing more was said for half an hour,— Gritty isn't much of a talker, you know,— but finally she came out with, 'Anyway, we'll just see,' as if we had been talking right along. Next day she made them two deep-pan pies and set 'em away to cool. In the morning she was gone. Now that's all I know about it."

Barton Centre, however, worked itself into a fine fury of excitement. It laid hold of the bare, unbudded facts and sprouted a marvellous foliage of fancy. "Gritty" Staples had disappeared. As she had neither relatives nor friends in any other part of the country, it was not likely that she had gone on a visit. Then where had she gone ? And why ? Had anything happened to her ? If so, what ? And how ? Barton Centre had much leisure to devote to discussion of these problems and, so far as words went, did them full justice.

Before the end of the week searching parties went through the woods. The mill pond was dragged. The searchers found more or less hickory nuts which the squirrels had not yet gathered ; the drag-net party brought to light the rear wheels of Jeff Thornton's old buggy which the boys had run into the pond three summers before.

Next Mr. "Lank" Hallowell was urged to action. At almost any time of the day one or two persons might have been seen in his tin shop, advising him as to what he ought to do in this matter

of his lost sister-in-law. Some thought he should advertise in the Boston papers, others that he should send "Gritty's" description to chiefs of police all over the country. Silas Barker was for offering a $500 reward, and Lem Andrews thought detectives should be engaged.

"Lank" Hallowell continued to mend leaky boilers and to hammer away at stove-pipe joints. "It does seem to me that something ought to be done," said he, "but Mary, she won't listen to it. The Stapleses have always been mighty good folks, but most of them have had queer notions. Mary isn't quite so queer as Gritty, but she has her ideas. 'Wherever Gritty's gone, she went of her own notion,' says she, 'and I guess she's old enough to look out for herself.' No, Mary isn't worrying any. She don't seem to care to talk much about Gritty's going off, though, so I wouldn't say anything to her about it if I was you."

The Barton Centre folks took this advice, but they talked enough among themselves to make up for what they did not say to Mrs. Hallowell. "Gritty" Staples had lived among them more or less quietly all her life. They expected her to continue to do so to the end. True, she had occasionally done some unexpected things — embraced Christian Science, had herself elected a member of the School Committee, called the Selectmen "a pack of old fogies" in open town meeting, and the like — but never had she done anything so radical as to disappear with two mince pies, and her townspeople were penetrated by a just indignation.

An active, aggressive, energetic person was "Gritty" Staples — slim of figure, not wholly unattractive as to face and possessing a self-sufficient, confident air that seemed to challenge criticism. She talked but little, never about herself, her ills, her joys, her plans. She went out to do days' sewing, and, when not thus engaged, made her home at the Hallowells'. It was believed that she had money in the bank. That she had never married was no mystery. The young men of Barton Centre were afraid of her, although none would admit as much.

It was just before Thanksgiving when "Gritty" and the pies disappeared, but it was long after New Year's before the daily question in Barton Centre ceased to be, "Wonder if any one's heard from 'Gritty' Staples?" Even after that the query came

up at all social gatherings and the matter was threshed out from beginning to end.

Just about the time of the big snowfall on Washington's Birthday waning interest in the affair was once more aroused. A stranger drove over from the station in a cutter and asked the way to "Mr. Melancthon Hallowell's place of business."

"Oh, you want to find Lank's tin shop, eh?" responded Silas Barker. "It's just beyond the post-office."

The stranger wore a silk hat and a fur-trimmed overcoat, so he must have come from New York or from Boston, at least. He remained with "Lank" for half an hour and then drove back to the station. He was not out of the village before nine persons, each with a different excuse, found their way into the tin shop. But "Lank" had nothing to communicate. All agreed, however, that he seemed worried. No one doubted that the stranger's visit had to do with the disappearance of "Gritty." Several times during the catechism which followed did "Lank" appear to be on the point of weakening and telling his neighbors all about it, yet on each occasion he had refrained. But the next day, after he had talked it over with Mrs. Hallowell, his jaws were set resolutely. Not for a fortnight did Barton Centre despairingly settle down off its tip-toes.

A month went by, two months. Then, one day early in May, came a great stir. Jeff Thornton, who kept the livery stable, got a telegram from Boston ordering him to meet a special train at 3.15 P. M. with an open carriage and four horses. Jeff let down the cracked leather top of his old hack, borrowed a horse, spliced his reins and drove away to the railroad station so full of importance and excitement that his face fairly shone from redness. At least a third of Barton Centre accompanied him. Another third had gone before.

The station agent was mystified and disturbed. But his professional instincts led him to conceal these emotions beneath an official calm.

"Yes, sir, special train's due at 3.15. She's to take a siding and then follow the 3.25 back into Boston. Them's the orders." Such was the Delphic utterance that veiled an almost hysterical excitement.

A special train coming to Crossway Station ! It was almost unheard of. Only once, and then when a President had made a New England tour, had such a thing occurred. And this special was to stop ! Hence, it carried some one whose destination was Barton Centre, for there was Jeff Thornton and there was his rig. Barton Centre lined up along the track and strained its eyes Bostonwards.

At last it came. Tearing down the line was an engine, a baggage car and — yes, it was a Pullman. With a fine hissing of air brakes the special drew up at Crossway Station. First appeared the conductor at one end. Off the other swung a colored porter, car step in hand. Next appeared a personage. He was tall, dark, whiskered and important. He wore a strange and resplendent uniform. There was much gold lace and many shiny buttons about it. Stepping out on the platform he looked inquiringly around until his eye caught Jeff Thornton's rig. Jeff waved his whip invitingly and motioned to the open carriage door.

The personage raised his eyebrows, bowed and re-entered the car. In a moment the colored porter brought out an extension grip, half covered with foreign-looking labels, and handed it reverently to Jeff.

Then the personage reappeared, backing deferentially. Lastly, looking as unconcerned as if she had been stepping out of a carryall instead of a special train, came " Gritty " Staples. Ignoring the proffered hand of the personage, she walked down the car steps, crossed the platform and said to Jeff, " Have you got my satchel there, Jeff ? "

The astonished Mr. Thornton tried to reply, gasped once or twice and ended by holding up the article in question.

" Oh, all right," said " Gritty." Then she allowed herself to be helped into the carriage, permitted the uniformed personage to raise her hand to his whiskered lips, and was driven to Barton Centre and to the home of her sister. To such a pitch had popular interest in its heroine risen that not even the station master was subsequently able to recall what became of her hirsute escort or the phenomenal " special."

In a semi-official statement Mrs. Hallowell later gave Barton Centre as much of the story as it was evident she meant to give.

"It was just as I thought at the time," thus ran the statement. "Barbara thought she would like to have the Czar try her mince pies, so she went to Russia and took a couple of them along with her. He did like the pies, too. Barbara expected he would."

You may well imagine that Barton Centre was entirely and unanimously dissatisfied with this meagre announcement. Particulars, details, were wanted. How had she travelled to Russia? How had she managed to see the Czar? What was the reason for her spectacular homecoming? Who was the whiskered personage? Yet nothing more would Mrs. Hallowell say, and "Gritty," who was said to be resting after her long trip, was not to be seen. As "Lank" had admitted, the Stapleses always did have queer notions. Keeping one's business to one's self seemed to be among them.

If Barton Centre's curiosity had been stirred by the disappearance of "Gritty" Staples, the manner of her return caused it to reach a stage where it might very properly have been said to have seethed. Anyway, that word is as good as another. None in the dictionary could have done full justice.

This seething process continued for a full week and then, from quite an unexpected source, came that by which it was allayed. Silas Barker's eldest boy, who was a clerk in the Pension Department at Washington, was taken sick and sent to a hospital there. Mr. Barker, on going to see him, found his son getting better. Also he made the acquaintance of young Mr. Barker's most intimate friend.

"From Barton Centre, eh," said the intimate friend of young Mr. Barker. "Why, that's where that Barbara Staples lives, isn't it? Jim, I had forgotten that was your town."

The elder Mr. Barker, his eyes shining with aroused interest, responded that Miss Barbara Staples was a resident of Barton Centre, and he added the tentative suggestion that she was a remarkable woman.

"I should say so," said the intimate friend of the younger Barker. "She's the woman whose record a friend of mine in the Secret Service was sent to look up last winter."

"The man in the fur-trimmed overcoat," whispered Mr. Barker to himself. Aloud he said, "Yes?"

"Queer case that, eh? But I suppose you've written your son all about it."

"No," said the elder Mr. Barker, "I haven't told Jim a word yet. You tell him."

"Why," thus began the intimate friend, "it seems that this Miss Staples showed up at the American embassy in St. Petersburg along last December and demanded an interview with the Czar. Of course the clerks and attaches thought her crazy. They tried to humor her and put her off so as to keep her out of trouble. But that game didn't work. She wouldn't be fooled — just hung around the embassy from morning until night, and at last they had to let her see the Ambassador himself.

"She told the Ambassador that she had come all the way from Barton Centre with two mince pies for the Czar and that she proposed to give them to him in person. More than that, she wanted to see him again, to find out how he liked the pies.

"Well, sir, she talked so straight and seemed so dead in earnest that the Ambassador had to promise that he would try and arrange an audience for her. His idea was to keep her waiting until she got tired and went home. But there was no tire out to her. She kept at him, day in and day out, until he finally did lay the case before the Grand Duke of Something-or-Other, who has charge of the Czar's household. The Grand Duke told the Ambassador to send him full particulars about the woman, so the State Department was cabled for information. The Secretary sent out my friend and he found that in Barton Centre she was O. K.

"When the Grand Duke got the report it seems that he told the Emperor, by way of a joke, about the woman who had brought him two mince pies from America. The Czar laughed and said he would see the woman and accept her pies. And he did. She had a private audience in the Winter Palace and she gave her pies to the Czar with her own hands. I suppose they tested them, and when he found the pies were not poisoned, the Czar tried a piece. At least, they say he did. Anyway, he sent for Miss Staples again, thanked her for the pies and told her, if she ever came to St. Petersburg again, to bring him some more. When she left for home she carried a letter to the Russian Consul in Boston, and I understand that they sent her out where she lived in a special